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God's Plantation thriving.

A

S E R M O N

ON PSALM xcii. 12.

Preached on a sacramental Occasion at KINROSS;
and afterwards enlarged upon at a Solemnity
of the same nature at LINTON, 1766.

B. Y.

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Minister of the Gospel at KIRKCALDY.

PUBLISHED BY PARTICULAR DESIRE.

*They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by
the water-courses.*

ISA. xlv. 4.

G L A S G O W :

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S E R M O N.

P S A L. xcii. 12.

The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree ; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

THE language of the book of inspiration is very familiar : therein God compares himself to a tree, Hosea xiv. 8 ; and therein the godly are compared unto trees ; the palm and the cedar trees, as in the 12th verse : *The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree ; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.* Verse 13th, *Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God.* Verse 14th, *They shall bring forth fruit in old age ; they shall be fat and flourishing.* Ver. 15th, *To shew that the Lord is upright.*

1st, In the 13th verse notice the good soil the righteous are planted in ; they are planted in the house of the Lord. Do they spring of themselves ? No ; they are planted ; where ? in the fields ? No, no ; but in the house of the Lord : that is, in the church of God, 1 Tim. iii. 15. The church is called the house of the Lord, not only because he built it, Matth. xvi. 18 ; but also because he dwells in it, Psal. cxxxii. 13, 14. The name of this house is *Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there* indeed ; the

Lord is every where ; but he is there as a *bleſſing* God, as the God of *ſalvation*. If you ask, what it is to be planted in the houſe of the Lord ? I anſwer, It is to be made real and living members of the church, by believing in Chriſt, the *head* of it, Heb. xii. 24. They who are ingrafted into Chriſt, are *added* to the church, Acts. ii. 57. Obſerve, 2dly, The *good condition* the righteous ſhall be kept in : it is here promiſed,

1. That they ſhall *grow* ; *The righteous ſhall grow like a cedar in Lebanon*. Lebanon was a mountain in the north of Canaan ; once poſſeſſed by the Hevites, and afterwards by the Iſraelites ; on which mountain grew cedars. A traveller informs us, that the oaks of England are but ſhrubs compared with the cedars in Lebanon. Now, ſays the infallible Speaker, the righteous ſhall grow, not like the ſhrubs in the wood, but like a cedar in Lebanon.

2. That they ſhall *flouriſh* ; that is, they ſhall be *cheerful* themſelves, and in *vogue*, or eſteem : they ſhall be reſpected by thoſe about them. They ſhall flouriſh, though not in outward, yet in inward proſperity : though not in external, yet in internal ornaments. They ſhall flouriſh, both in the inward comfort of their own ſouls, and in the credit of their profeſſion. It is obſervable, their flouriſhing is here thrice mentioned : Ver. 12th, *They ſhall flouriſh like the palm-tree* ; in ver. 7th, the wicked, the workers of iniquity, are ſaid to *flouriſh as the graſs*, which is ſoon withered ; ſoon ripe and ſoon rotten ; whereas the palm-tree, we are told, is an ever-green ; not obnoxious to rottenneſs, and that it

thrives under a burden: So, even so, shall the righteous flourish. They shall thrive even under affliction, *Exod. i. 12.* The more the Egyptians afflicted the Israelites, the more they multiplied. The blessed man's leaf shall not wither, *Psal. i. 3.*—Again, ver. 13. *They shall flourish in the courts of our God;* that is, in the ordinances of our God, especially the public ordinances: these are called the courts of our God, in as much as our God walks in them, and in as much as in them we appear before our God, before the presence of his grace: and hence, *one day in his courts is better than a thousand.*—Farther, ver. 14th, last clause, *They shall be fat and flourishing:* their flourishing without is from a fatness within; that is, from the health and vigour, the liveliness and sparkling of their souls towards God. And how do they become fat? I answer, By *eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man,* *John vi. 54.* *Whosoever eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life.*

3. That they shall be fruitful, verse 14th, first clause, *They shall bring forth fruit in old age.* The trees of righteousness, as they are called, *Isa. lxi. 9.* shall not, like other trees, when they become old, leave off bearing; No, no: in old age they shall still bring forth fruit; that is, their last days shall be their best days; and their last works shall be their best works. As rivers, the nearer they come to the ocean, whither they tend, the more are their waters increased: so, the nearer the righteous approach to the ocean of glory, the more their hearts are fitted for the inheritance. The gradation used in these

verses is very remarkable. Their *fruitfulness* supposes their *flourishing*; that cannot flourish which grows not: and their growing supposes their being *planted*; that cannot grow which is not planted.

We may observe two things concerning these promises.

(1.) That they belong not to mens *relative state*, their state of *justification*; but to their *absolute state*, their state of *sanctification*: for the person, or persons, to whom they are made, are *righteous*, and so already in a *justified* state, which is incapable of augmentation; *Ye are complete in him*, Col. ii. 10. Justification is complete the first moment they believe, Acts xiii. 39. In this respect they are *perfect*, but not so in respect of their sanctification; nay, in this respect they are *imperfect* while in the body, Phil. iii. 10. The sanctification of a believer is capable of augmentation: and the promises here, being promises of *growth*, must therefore belong to it.

(2.) These promises belong to *new-testament times*, gospel times; called *days of the Son of man*, Luke xvii. 22. Days of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, coming with power on mens hearts, are days of the Son of man; and in these days, shall the righteous grow and flourish: *In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth*, Psal. lxxii. 7.

It is the last clause of the 12th verse I have chiefly in view: from which I may deduce the following observation.

Doctr. *The righteous man shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

The method in which I would, by divine assistance, prosecute this doctrine, is the following.

- I. To enquire who is the *righteous* man.
- II. What is that in which he shall *grow*, and what it is to grow.
- III. After what *manner* shall he grow.
- IV. By what *means* shall the righteous man grow.
- V. Render the *reasons* of the doctrine.
- VI. Apply the whole in some *inferences* and *uses*.

I. We proposed first to enquire, Who is the *righteous* man? Take the following description of him.

1st, He is one who *receives* Christ; *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God*, John i. 12. By receiving Christ he closes with, and is united to him; and so becomes a Christian indeed. As the union of matter and form makes a body, the union of soul and body makes a man; so, the union of Christ and man together, makes a man a Christian: and this union is the foundation of communion with Christ in his righteousness. And so,

2^{dly}, He is one who has a *justifying righteousness* in Christ, Isa. xlv. 24. *Surely, shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: righteousness, for justification; and strength for sanctification. Where have I righteousness for sanctification? Not*

in myself; not in my faculties; not in my heart and free will; not in my life; not in my walk and conversation; not in my religious duties and performances: No, no, Rom. iv. 5. I come to Christ as one that is in myself ungodly; acknowledging that the righteousness whereby I can stand before God, the Judge of all, is not in myself, either in whole or in part: and where is it then? tell us plainly: *in the Lord only*. In him have I righteousness of *nature*: the holiness of his human nature is imputed unto me; it is reckoned mine; it is my holiness. In the Lord have I righteousness and *life*: the obedience of his life is imputed unto me; it is reckoned mine; it is my obedience. In the Lord have I righteousness of *death*: his death is imputed to me, it is reckoned mine; it is my death: *I am crucified with Christ*; in him I am the *righteousness of God*: I am righteous by his righteousness; by his obedience to death: *By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous*, Rom. v. 19.

II. We proceed next to enquire, what is that in which the righteous man *shall grow*; and what it is *to grow*?

1st, It is called the *new man*, Eph. iv. 24. And the new man is the same with the *new-creature*, Galat. vi. 15. *In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature*. And what is the new creature? I answer, It is explained by the Apostle into *faith which worketh by love*: Galat. v. 6. *In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision,*

but faith which worketh by love. Of this creature we may say, *faith in Christ* is, as it were, the *head*; and *love to God* is, as it were, the *heart*. I here observe, that the opposite to the new man is called the *old man*, Col. iii. 9. And of this man we may say, *unbelief* is the *head*, and *hatred* is the *heart*. To *grow*, is to increase in the several parts of the new man; in every part of the new creature. I mention three or four parts here. To *grow*, is to increase;

1. In the *spiritual knowledge* of the *understanding*, as Job, last chap. and 5th ver. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eyes see thee.* The knowledge he had of God before, was like that which a person hath of a thing by report; but the knowledge he now hath of God, is like that which a person hath by eye-sight: now he *sees* what he *heard* of before. Hosea vi. 3. *We shall know; we shall follow on to know;* so we read without the *if*, which is a supplement: and the meaning is, our knowledge shall be increased; we shall know more of God, Dan. xii. 4.

2. In the *spiritual pliability* of the *will*, as David, Psal. cxxxi. 2. *My soul is even as a weaned child.* How? A child may be fretful when the mother is weaning it from the milk; but in a day or two, the fret is over; it can live upon stronger food: my soul was even like this child; it was fretful when God was weaning it from creature comforts; but at length it submitted to the divine pleasure; and, at present, lives comfortably upon God

in the promises. Psal. cxix. 5. *O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!* Ver. 10. *O let me not wander from thy commands!* Fain would he be what God would have him be: fain would he be submission; all submission to God.

3. In the *spiritual tenderness* of the conscience, as Joseph; Gen. xxxix. 9. *How can I do this wickedness, and sin against God!* Not only how shall I, how dare I! but how can I. *Id non possumus, quod non jure possumus*; "We cannot do that which we cannot lawfully do." How can I do this, in a consistency with the authority of God; in the seventh command? It is inconsistent with my duty to my God, who *is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with approbation*; and so he flies from adultery. The motto of the tender conscience is, CAVE, DEUS VIDET; *God sees.*

4. In the *spiritual regularity* of their affections. Rom. viii. 4. *They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the spirit, do mind the things of the spirit*: that is, they favour the things that be of God, John iii. 6. *That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit, i.e. spiritual*; and being spiritual, there is a suitableness in the faculties of their souls to spiritual things; and so they are pleased with them, as the eye is with colours, the ear with sounds, and the belly with meats: and hence spiritual things are frequently first in their thoughts, in the morning; and last in their thoughts in the evening; and often in their thoughts through the day: *My meditation of him shall be sweet.*

Thus I say, to grow, is to increase in the several

parts of the new man; and when there is an increase in the several parts of the *new man*, there will be a decrease in the several parts of the *old man*: an emblem of this we have in the house of David, and in the house of Saul, 2 Sam. iii. 1. The new man, like the house of David, *waxes stronger and stronger*; and the old man, like the house of Saul, *waxes weaker and weaker*.—To the same purpose.

2dly, It is called *grace*, John i. 16. *Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace*: that is, say some, grace in us, *answering* to the grace in Christ; as the impression upon the wax, there is point answering to point upon the seal: or, grace for grace; that is, *grace after grace*; beginning grace, advancing and promoting grace.—We here observe, that the *opposite* to grace is *corruption*, which the Apostle calls the *flesh*, Gal. v. 17. *The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; these two are contrary the one to the other*. To grow, is to *increase in grace*; and when there is an increase in grace, there is a decrease in corruption: grace eats into, and worms out the bowels of corruption. This increase of grace is called the *increase of God*, Col. ii. 29. and it is so called, because it is God that gives it: *Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; but God giveth the increase*, 1 Cor. iii. 6. *He giveth more grace*, Jam. iv. 5. Wherever he gives true grace, he gives more grace; and that by a new *creating* act: and hence, when David prays for an *increase* of grace, he says, Psal. li. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me*. And also, by a new rege-

nerating act ; and hence Paul says to the Galatians, who both knew God, and were known of God, *My little children, of whom I travel in birth again, until Christ be formed in you*, Gal. iv. 19. And so growth is a continued creation, a continued regeneration. Isa. xl. 31. *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength* ; that is, they whose dependence is in the Lord, shall *change* their strength, for so is the word in the original ; and it is a metaphor borrowed from those who have change of garments for sundry days ; some have a garment for the sabbath-day, a garment for the work day ; a garment for working, a garment for walking ; a garment for summer, and a garment for winter : so, *they that wait upon the Lord shall change their strength* : when they need strength to fight the powers of darkness, they shall have that ; when they need strength to do exploits, they shall have that ; when they need strength to die, they shall have it : *As thy days, so shall thy strength be* : and hence, in Eph. iv. 7. Paul says, *Unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ* ; that is, grace is measured out by Christ to each of us, in a suitableness to our need, and in a way becoming his munificence and liberality : he gives like a king, a wife king.

For preventing mistakes, I must here say, the *first* regeneration, and this *continued* regeneration differs : the first regeneration is a *specific* change, a change from nature to grace ; but this continued regeneration is only a *gradual* change, a change from a lower to a higher degree of grace : as a skilful limner, in

drawing the picture of any thing, he first forms a rough portraiture of all the lineaments of it; and then, by repeated strokes of his pencil, he embellishes these, till he has rendered them complete. In the first regeneration, we are mere *passives*, as some say we will be in the perfecting of the good work: but in this *continued* regeneration we are not mere passives; God therein, for ordinary, proportions his influences to our spiritual endeavours; and our thoughts work upon the means, as well as the means work upon us. *Every man that hath this hope in him, (viz. of being like Christ,) purifyeth himself even as he is pure, 1 John iii. 3. Acti agimus;* "being acted upon, we act". Song ii. 4. *Draw me, we will run after thee:* we will follow hard after thee, as the steel follows the loadstone.

III. The third general head in the method was, to enquire, what are the *means* by which the righteous man grows.—These, we think, are principally of three kinds.

1st, The *ordinances* are the *outward* means of his growth: more particularly,

1. The *word read*, especially as *preached*, is a mean of his growth. Paul says, Acts xx. 32. *I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them that are sanctified.* The word of God's grace is the gospel; and by the blessing of God upon it, it is able to build believers up in holiness, and to give them an inheritance; because *immortality* and *eternal life* are brought to light

thereby; and the *promise of eternal life* is given therein. The word of God's grace, the gospel, as mused upon, is a mean of up-building. Psal. i. 2, 3. *He that doth meditate on the Lord's law;* (that is, in the law of *typical institutions*, which were the gospel of the fathers; or in the *law of faith*, as the gospel is called, Rom. iii. 27.) *he, even he, shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.* When God leads us through a variety of pleasant gospel truths, to chew the cud, (if I may be allowed the expression) upon one gospel truth this day, and another to-morrow; yea, there is as much in *one* gospel truth, as is refreshing for many days; thereby we are nourished, and so built up.

2. The *sacraments*, especially that of the *supper*, is a mean of his growth, 1 Cor. x. 16. *The bread which we break, is it not the communion?* that is, is it not the *sign* of our communion with Christ in his body, as broken for us? *and the cup, or wine in the cup, which we bless, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?* that is, is it not the *sign* of our communion with Christ in his blood, as shed for the remission of our sins? 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25. *This bread is my body broken for you;* that is, it is a *seal* to confirm you in the faith of this, that my body was broken in your stead: *and this cup is the new testament in my blood, shed for the remission of sins unto many;* that is, it is a *seal* to confirm you in the faith of the legacies of the new testament, especially the leading legacy, the remission of sin, secured by the shedding of my blood.—The promises of the

gospel are like a *disposition* to God, as our inheritance; and the *sacraments* are like the *infeftment* in that inheritance: a sacrament signifies an *oath*; a sealing ordinance is so called, because therein we not only swear to the Lord, that we will fight his battles; but he also therein swears to us, that he will bestow all blessings on us; and thereby we are nourished, and so built up.

2dly. The *dispensations* of *divine providence* are the *occasional* means of his growth. Rom. viii. 28. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.* All things may be reduced to these two sorts of things. There are *prosperous* things, and *prosperous* dispensations, by the blessing of God, prevail against some sins. There are *adverse* things, and *adverse* dispensations, by the blessing of God, prevail against other sins, 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17. *For which cause we faint not; though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day: for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* Here is the growth, the renewing day by day, of the inward man, under the decays, the perishing of the outward; yea, the decays, the perishing of the outward man, contribute to the growth of the inward: for our affliction works *glory* for us, inasmuch as thereby God purges out sin, the impediment of glory; and in as much as God thereby occasions a vigorous exercise of grace, the beginning of glory: for it has this influence, while we look not at things seen, because they are temporal; but at the things which are not seen, because

they are eternal. The Martyrs zeal for Christ was increased by persecutions. Peter's courage was increased by the opposition of the high priest and rulers, Acts iv. 8, 9, 10.—Thus when the believer's flesh wastes and wears off, he thereby gets new spirits, takes heart, and becomes the more vigorous; and so grows.

3dly, The special operations of the Spirit are the internal means of his growth. Phil. ii. 3. *It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.* The ordinances and dispensations of providence, of themselves, cannot either infer or increase grace, but as they are accompanied with irresistible influences of the Spirit; which are compared to the wind blowing on a garden, Song iv. 16. *Awake, O north wind; and come thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out:* for, as in 1 Cor. iii. 7. *Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God is every thing, who giveth the increase.*—Here we would observe the following particulars:

1. The Spirit, by the ordinances and dispensations of providence, working upon our hearts, makes us acquainted more and more with the love of God. Rom. v. 5. *The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost.* The electing love of God, the redeeming love of God, the adopting love of God, as to the sense of it, is poured into our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, 1 John iii. 1. *Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.* In 1 Samuel. xviii. 23. David says to Saul's servants,

Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king's son-in-law ? But what was it to be king Saul's son-in-law, to being a son in gospel to God, the King of kings ? Now, when the Spirit gives us the sense of the love of God, this makes us grow, Psal. xviii. 35. in meter, Thy kindness great hath made me grow. God's kindness in putting Christ into our doing and dying room, and in pardoning all our sins, enlarges our hearts ; and when our hearts are enlarged, we run in the way of God's commands ? The heart enlarged with the love of God, is like oil to the wheels of our obedience.

2. I here observe, the Spirit, by the ordinances and dispensations of providence, working upon our hearts, makes us acquainted more and more with the *Christ* of God. John xvi. 14. Christ speaking there of the Spirit, says, *He shall glorify me ; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.* And when the Spirit shews Christ unto us, this makes us grow. In 2 Peter iii. 18. the Apostle speaks of *growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.* Men may grow in *moral* virtue, without the knowledge of Christ ; but men cannot grow in *grace*, without growing in the knowledge of Christ. Christ being the object of grace ; the object must be known, before any art can be exercised about it : and as the object is cleared up, the acts about it are the more intense ; as the more fuel the fire is supplied with, the heat will be the more intense : and so the faster a man grows in the knowledge of Christ, the faster he grows in grace ; for, as the knowledge of Christ hath grace for its

fruit, so it hath faith in its root; and according to the degrees of our faith in Christ, such will be the degrees of our other graces: according to the thriving of our faith, such will be the thriving of our other graces. John. vii. 38. *He that believeth in me, out of his belly [that is, out of his heart,] shall flow rivers of living water;* that is, the egress and outgoings of all other graces. *Faith* is the first link of that golden chain of graces, in 1 Tim. i. 5. It is like the noble Centurion, who says to one, Go, and he goeth; to another, Come, and he cometh.

3. I would observe, that the saving knowledge of Christ, by which we grow in grace, is not by the precepts nor the threatnings; by the precepts and threatnings we may know God, as one person knows another by his back: but by the promises, we know thereby how he stands affected towards us in his heart; for he is in the promises, and the promises are in him, 2 Cor. i. 20. And it is by the promises we are made partakers of grace; not only commencing, but also crowning grace; 2 Peter i. 4. *Whereby [that is, by the gospel,] are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature.* By the promises, in the hand of the Spirit, we are made partakers of the divine nature, in the first draughts of it in regeneration: By the promises, in the hand of the Spirit, we are made partakers of the divine nature in the further draughts of it, in progressive sanctification: And by the promises in the hand of the Spirit, we are made partakers of the divine nature in the finishing draughts of it, in glorification.

The promise will send us into possession. Several of these great and precious promises are recorded in 2 Cor. vi. 3. *I will dwell in them and walk in them: I will be their God, and they shall be my people. I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* Chap. vii. 1. *Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* Hath these promises rushed with power, the power of the Spirit, into our souls? are they rushing with power into our hearts? Then, having them thus, we have wind and tide on our side: *Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, etc. Let us, through the spirit, mortify the deeds of the body,* Rom. viii. 13. *If ye, through the spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* This verse may admit of this exposition; Through the Spirit we mortify not only the body of sin, but also the deeds of the body; the deeds of the body, are sins formerly committed, and repented of, but afterwards may prove a snare, and become sweet to the taste. When this is the case, it argues much corruption in us. These deeds are to be mortified; and through the Spirit only we mortify them: and how mortified through the Spirit, has been declared. I only farther say, that as the *life* of all sin lies in the *pleasure* of it; in love of pleasure, more than of God: so, if pleasure be taken from sin, it dies: if love, joy, and delight be fixing upon God, and taken from sin, it dies: and the Spirit takes pleasure from sin, by bringing our hearts more and more into communion with the Father and his Son; and the

pleasures of this being greater, kills the pleasure of sin.

Not a few things, in relation to the *means* of the righteous man's growth, will occur in the prosecution of the remaining heads: but before I conclude this head, there are two summaries of the means of his growth which I shall glance at.

The first I mention is in Titus ii. 11, 12, 13, 14. *The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, [or, as in the margin, which bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared] teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, etc. The grace of God [that is, the gospel, which is the doctrine of God's grace, of his love and kindness,] it hath appeared, [viz like the morning star, or rising sun,] bringing salvation unto all men; [that is, it brings salvation unto all men in respect of the offer of salvation, not to Jews only, but also to the Gentiles,] teaching us, [that is, us to whom it is given in Christ's behalf to believe; for verse 13th, it is said, we are looking for the blessed hope,] that denying ungodliness, we should live soberly, etc. What the law teaches preceptively, that the gospel teaches effectively. Ungodliness, and worldly lusts, never meet with their match, until they meet with the grace of God: and living soberly, righteously, and godly, never takes place till the grace of God be received in truth. Lactantius, in his Apology for the Christians of his time, said to the Heathen, "Give me a man who is passionate; by the grace of God, he shall be rendered as meek as a lamb: Give me*

“ a man who is covetous ; and by the grace of God,
 “ he shall be made liberal : Give me one who is un-
 “ clean ; by the grace of God he shall be made
 “ chaste,” *etc. etc.* Romain, a preacher in the city
 of London, in his Lectures upon cviith Psalm, says,
 “ *Moral preaching* has preached *morality* out of pa-
 “ rishes, and out of nations. This *moral preaching*,
 “ says he, has made our people so immoral, that
 “ they have got to a pitch of *wickedness* beyond
 “ what the Heathen arrived at.” And if you ask,
 what is the best method of preventing immorality,
 for taking out of the heart evil thoughts, murders,
 adulteries, thefts, blasphemies ? I answer, the only
 method for taking those out of the heart is the gos-
 pel preached, with the Holy Ghost sent down from
 heaven. Rom. i. 16. *I am not ashamed of the gospel*
of Christ ; for it is the power of God to salvation, to
every one that believes : for therein is the righteous-
ness of God revealed from faith to faith, etc.

The last summary of the means of his growth, I
 mention, is recorded, 2 Cor. iii. 18. *We all with*
open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the
Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to
glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. The face
 here, is the face of the Lord ; said to be open, in op-
 position to the face of Moses, which was veiled,
 verse 13. and because the vail of ceremonies is re-
 moved. Indeed on earth, we behold not the face of
 the Lord itself, though open or uncovered, for face
 to face ; knowledge is the knowledge of those in hea-
 ven : *We see darkly as through a glass ; we behold*
as in a glass the glory of the Lord : the glass here

is the gospel, ordinances; the word of the gospel, and sacraments: and the *glory of the Lord* here, is not only the *perfections* of Christ, but also his *justifying righteousness*; for we are said to be *changed into the same image*; that is, the image of that righteousness is wrought in our hearts. Is that image glory too? I answer, Yes, yes: for so it follows, *from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord*; that is, by the Spirit we are advanced from one degree of grace to another, till we be laid in the bosom of God: for grace is the seed of glory; and glory the flower of grace: where the Spirit begins, he ceases not till he perfects the work, till he makes the man *glory* itself, all over glory, Psal. lxxiii 25.

Here a question occurs, *How doth the Spirit exert this metamorphosing, or transforming efficacy upon our souls?*

To which we answer, by enabling us to *behold* the glory of Christ as in a glass; and to behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, is to meditate believingly upon the perfections and justifying righteousness of Christ, as held forth in the ordinances; it is to have multiplied thoughts about these: and the oftener we eye Christ's righteousness for acceptance, the more we are transformed into its likeness. By every act of faith we gain a furtherance of the features of this most glorious image, which we shall bear in perfection in heaven, 1 Cor. xiv. 49. *As we have born the image of the earthly, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly*; and therefore, let us look to him with the eye of faith; this affects the heart and assimilates the person, Isa. xlv. 22. Psal. xxxiv. 5.

Moreover, I may observe, that the *means* of his growth are compared to *water poured upon the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground*, Isa. xlv. 3, 4. *I will pour water on the thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: that is, I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and then they shall spring up as among the grass, and as willows by the water courses: that is, One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, etc.*—They are compared to the *dew*, Hof. xiv. 5, 6, 7. *I will be as the dew unto Israel. The Lord will give Israel the dew of heaven; Gen. xxvii. 28. God give thee of the dew of heaven: he himself will be as that, and then he shall grow as the lilly, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon; his branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive-tree, and his smell as Lebanon, etc.*—They are compared to the *sun rising with healing under his wings*, Mal. iv. 3. *Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise, with healing under his wings.* Christ is the Sun of righteousness, being the fountain of light and vital head to his people, whom he enlightens and enlivens, when he visits them; for then *they go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.* There are the summer showers, the summer dews, and the summer sun, by which the *trees of righteousness grow like a cedar*; which, as a Naturalist observes, grows only in a warm climate.

IV. The fourth head, was to enquire after what *manner* shall the righteous man grow. The text

says, *like a cedar in Lebanon*. This tree is much spoken of both in sacred and common history. Pliny tells us of a cedar which was one hundred and thirty foot high, whose fibers, no doubt, were extended below, in proportion to the spread of its branches above, to prevent its being overthrown by hurricanes; so wise is the God of nature. The cedar grows four ways.

1. It grows *downward*, still deeper into the ground: so the righteous man grows *downward*; lower and lower, in respect of *humility* and *self-denial*. How low did Paul sink in his own eyes? Eph. iii. 8. *I am less than the least of all saints*. Having used the three degrees of comparison, he puts a comparative above a superlative: as if he had said, I am a *little* saint, I am less than other saints; I am the *least* saint; yea, *less* than the least saints: *I am the chief of sinners*, 1 Tim. i. 15. *I am nothing*, 2 Cor. xii. 11. The more light, the more a man sees into himself; and the more he sees into himself, the more corruption he sees; and the more corruption he sees, the more he loaths and abhors himself, the more humble is he. It is lamentable, that some Christians are so fond of themselves, of the good that is in them, that the Lord judges the fittest thing to cure them of this, is to leave them to themselves; and when thus leaving them to themselves hath brought them to a discovery of themselves, and this distrust hath taught them faith in God; then the Lord hath obtained his end, and will change his way with them. It is said that the bottom of the pit, or well, gives the best prospect of the heavenly luminaries: so likewise those

who are most filled with self-abasement have, for the most part, eagle-like views, the clearest views of things within the veil: for the Lord dwells with them, and they dwell with him, in a peculiar manner, by heavenly contemplations, Isa. lvii. 15. This leads me to say,

2. The cedar grows *upward*, still higher: so the righteous man grows *upward*, higher and higher in respect of *heavenly-mindedness* and *contempt* of the world, Phil. ii. 13, 14. *Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto these things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, in Christ.* The spirit of a righteous man, by converse with the great God, is greatened, so greatened, as to overlook the preferments, profits, and pleasures of the world. Heb. xi. 24, 25 *By faith Moses, when he was come to years, [or, according to the original, when he was waxed great, viz. in spirit, as well as in stature,] he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; chusing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* This conversing with the great God, had made all sublunary things appear to him as petty things, and empty bubbles. The righteous man, with a holy ambition, aspires toward the upper world; Phil. iii. 20. *Our conversation is in heaven.* He converses more and more in heaven; he longs more and more to wing away for the paradise of God; to be in that blessed region where God is *all in all*.

3. The cedar grows *inward*, always stronger: so the righteous man grows inwardly stronger and

stronger, in respect of the *habits of grace*, Job xvii. 9. *The righteous shall hold on his way; and the man of clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.* David, in Psal. xxvi. 6. says, *I will wash my hands in innocency; that is, in Christ's innocency:* by the fresh application of the blood of Jesus the conscience is purged from dead works, which defiled it. And he that hath hands thus cleansed, shall be stronger and stronger. Wherein shall he be stronger and stronger? We may answer, In *love*, Phil. i. 9. *This I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.* Although the hot flashes of love, which were in the righteous man, at his conversion may be cooled; yet his love becomes more judicious, more fixed in the judgment, and so the more permanent. When men have more knowledge than love, they are in danger of formality; and when they have more love than knowledge, they are in danger of superstition; but the right temperature of soul-health lies in the increase of our love, according to the increase of our knowledge; and our knowledge bearing some proportion unto these means of it which we enjoy. The more closely we unite to Christ, the more firmly we cleave to him; and the more frequently we make use of him as the head of influences, the stronger will our spiritual constitution, or disposition become.

4. The cedar grows *outward*, still more visible: so the righteous man grows *outward*, more and more visible in respect of *good words and works*; therein he abounds, 2 Cor. ix. 8. *God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye always having all*

sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. From which verse we learn, that as the end of each *grace* is to make the heart pliable to some command or other; so *good words* and *works* are nothing else but the breaking out, and shining forth of the habits of grace: good words, and good works, are such as are both for matter and manner required: they are such as are spoken and done in the strength of Christ, and to the glory of God, Phil. i. 11. *Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.* The fruits of righteousness are good words and works; and these are to the praise and glory of God, in as much as *aliens from the life of God* are thereby gained to him, 1-Pet. iii. 1, 2. "Were it possible, says one, that all the godly could keep in all their grace, then none in the world could see it, but God and themselves; none in all the world would be a whit the better for it. But Christ, in Matth. v. 16. says, *Let your light so shine before men that they seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in heaven.*" John xiv. 5. *He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit;* that is, he abounds in all the duties of religion; in duties towards God and man. A heathen could say, he is not *bonus vir*, a good man, that is not *bonus civis*, a good citizen; so we may say, he is not a good Christian, that is not a good minister, a good magistrate, a good husband, a good son, and a good servant; for the fruit of the Spirit, in the righteous man, is in all goodness, Eph. v. 9.

Further, concerning the righteous man's *inward* and *outward* growth. I observe, that they have a *reciprocal influence* upon one another; for, as good works proceed from the habits of grace, so by good works the habits of grace are more and more advanced: all habits are increased by acts; ill habits, by ill acts, and good habits by good acts: this I take to be the meaning of Rom. vi. 19. *As ye have yielded your members servants of uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity*; that is, in times past your sinful actions increased your sinful habits: even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness; that is, righteousness acted, or exercised, is righteousness unto holiness; that is, it tends to the increase of habitual holiness, which is the principle of further actual righteousness, verse 22. *Now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness.* To be free from sin, from the dominion of sin, and to be servants unto God, is to be holy; and therefore the *fruit* that is said to be *unto holiness*, must be a communication of more holiness.—Thus the righteous man grows four ways as the cedar tree. Yet I must add,

5. The cedars, as other trees, have their *winters* in which they grow not; so the righteous man has also his *winters* in which he grows not. David was not growing at the time in which he fell into grievous sins, the sins of murder and adultery, of which we have an account 2 Sam. xi. chap. The righteous man is not growing when he is under a declension, a decay, either as to the *frame* of his soul,

or as to the manner of his walking before God. Yet,

(1.) It may be here observed, that the *falls* and *decays* of the righteous man doth not, yea, cannot totally shake the *habits* of grace out of his heart, 1 John iii. 9. *Whoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.* The Apostle says, he doth not *commit* sin; yea, he *cannot* sin; that is, as the Devil sinneth, or so as wholly to unframe the new creature, and lay himself in an unregenerate state: and, why? because the *seed* of God remaineth in him; and because he is *born* of God. One sin in Adam quite expelled his holiness, though perfect: but *one* sin, yea, *many* sins in the righteous man, are not able to drive out the habits of grace, though imperfect in themselves; and the reason is, because although the habits of grace be defectable in itself, being a creature, yet it is not so, as to its dependence upon God. *We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God,* 2 Cor. iii. 5.

(2.) I here observe, that the Lord *recovers* the righteous man from his falls and decays, Exod. xv. 26. *I am the Lord that healeth thee.* Hosea. xiv. 4. *I will heal their backsliding.* Their backsliding imports guilt, and supposes a bent to backslide: in consequence of the corrupt part, there is a bent to backslide upon the heart, like the byass upon the bowl, that turns it aside, Hos. xi. 7. Now, the Lord heals their backsliding; that is, the *guilt* of their backsliding, by forgiving it all: and he heals

their backsliding ; that is, their *bent* to backslide, by giving fresh supplies of the Spirit ; and so their iniquity shall not be their ruin. Yea,

(3.) I here observe, that the Lord *overrules* the falls and decays of the righteous man, for promoting his growth, Psal. cxlvi. 14. *The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all that be bowed down.* But how doth the Lord uphold righteous men, when they fall? We answer, Although they fall into grievous sins sometimes ; yet he upholdeth them so, as that they are not suffered utterly to be cast down by sinking into the slough of despair ; nay, he raiseth up the bowed down ; he raiseth them up again more thankful to him, more watchful over themselves, and more mild towards their brethren, who may be overtaken in a fault. It is said by historians, that Peter never heard a cock crow, but the tears gushed out of his eyes ; for thereby he was put in mind of his grievous sin of denying Christ with an oath. Christ had said to him, *Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice*, Mark xiv. 30.—Thus the falls of righteous men, through the blessing of God, are useful and beneficial unto them ; which made one of the fathers express himself thus, “ Proud hearts have need of falls, as proud sores of eating plaisters.” I do not quote this to encourage aged men to sin ; God forbid : nay, let sin be destroyed by the vengeance of God, and the sinner saved by his mercy. Indeed, some have thought David was not the same after his fall, which he was before it : that he never attained to that sprightliness of soul towards God, after his fall, which he had before it.

But the contrary is evident to me from the third Psalm, which he penned after his fall, as the title bears. How does his soul boast in God! verse 2, 3. what familiarity doth the Lord allow him! verse 4, 5. There are two ways in which God expounds his grace; either by *keeping* men from falling into grievous sins, or by *pardoning* men who have fallen into these. It is a question, who of these are deepest in God's debt? I doubt not but in heaven each person will apprehend himself most indebted unto the grace of God; yet our Lord seems to give the preference to the last, Luke viii. 40,—50. *There was a certain creditor who had two debtors; the one owed five hundred pence, the other fifty: and when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.* Jesus approving of his answer, said, *This woman, whose sins are many, are forgiven her; therefore she loveth much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.* David had much forgiven him, therefore he loved much: he had a greater insight into the riches of God's mercy than before his fall; and hence he begins one of his penitential psalms, viz. the fifty-first, with a view of the multitude of God's tender mercies, for blotting out a multitude of sins.

But, say you, is it not said of Jehosaphat, he *walked in the first ways of his father David?* 2 Chron. xiv. which imports, that David's *last* ways were not like his *first* ways. I answer, This verse will admit of another reading from the original. Thus he walked in the ways of his father David; these *first* ways; that is, these *ancient* ways he proposed to himself for his pattern: the primitive times

of the royal family ; these purest times, before the corruption of the late reigns took place. And to this reading we are not only obliged by the text, but also by, Prov. iv. 18. *The path of the just man is as the shining light ; not as the evening light, which gradually gives place unto darkness, until it comes to be midnight ; so it is with the hypocrite, Hof. vi. 4. but as the morning light, which goes on gradually, and shineth more and more, till it comes to be mid-day, the perfect day of glory.*

V. The fifth general head, was, To render the *reasons* of the doctrine, why the righteous man shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. He shall grow, and that for the following reasons.

1. Because Christ *purchased* his growth, Eph. v. 25, 26, 27. *Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water, by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.* In John x. 10. Jesus speaking of his sheep says, *I am come, [viz. into the world,] that they might, [viz. by my death] have life, [not a decreasing life, nor a life that stays at a stand, but an increasing life,] that they might have it more abundantly :* that is, not only that they might live, but live comfortably ; furnished with all the accommodations and affluences of a spiritual life.

2. Because Christ *interceeds* for his growth, John xvii. 7. *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.* As if he had said, Father, make the

disciples more and more holy; increase their holiness more and more. But were any, except the then disciples, interested in this petition? I answer, Yes, yes; all believers, verse 20. *Neither pray I for those alone; but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.* If the holiness of believers increase not, the intercession of Christ ceases, or becomes powerless; neither of which can be: cease, it cannot; because *he ever lives to make intercession*: powerless, it cannot become; because he is a *Priest* after the power of an endless life; and *him the Father heareth always.*

3. Because Christ hath given a *gospel ministry* for this very purpose, Eph. iv. 11, 12. *He giveth some apostles, some teachers and pastors, for the perfecting of the saints*: not only for the converting of sinners, but also for the perfecting of the saints; that is, as in the last clause of that 12th verse, *for the edifying the body of Christ; for building it up in holiness and comfort, till we all come in, or into, the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.* The mystical body of Christ is here compared to a *man*; and the ministry of reconciliation shall continue till all the members of it come to be perfect as to degrees, as well as to parts: and this is the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, at which each member is appointed to arrive; and therefore he shall grow.— This leads me to say,

4. The righteous man shall grow, because the Father hath *for-ordained* him to be *conformed to the*

image of his Son, Rom. viii. 29. Whom he did fore know, them he did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, etc. Christ is the only finished pattern: for each of his saints have failed, even in that very grace wherein they excelled; but Christ was *holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners*. Further, I notice, that although he received the Spirit without measure; yet Luke teaches us, in chapter first, verse last, and in chapter second and last, *That Jesus grew in wisdom*: and so shall the righteous man grow.

5. Because otherwise he could not enter into heaven, *Matth. xiii. 3. Jesus said unto his disciples, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* They were formerly converted as to their *state*; but they needed a new conversion as to their *case*; from a lofty to a lowly frame of spirit and temper of mind. It is impossible any thing can be without its essential properties; and it is an essential property of grace to grow: it is as necessary to grow as to be born again; and if, says the apostle, *Phil. iii. 15. any be otherwise minded, that there is no such necessity of going on to perfection, God shall reveal it to him, viz. at one time or other.*

6. The righteous man shall grow, because thereby God manifests and declares his *faithfulness*: this is the reason assigned in the last verse of this Psalm; *The righteous shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon; why? To shew that the Lord is upright; that is, to publish and proclaim that Jehovah is faithful.* God hath promised to carry on the work he hath begun,

Matth. xxv. 29. *Unto every one that hath shall be given; that is, more shall be given.* Now, God shews himself upright, or faithful, by the exact performance of this promise. O how well contrived is the plan of our redemption! for therein things are so ranged as that our soul's prosperity is to the praise and glory of God's faithfulness, as well as grace; Luke ii. 10,—14. If God did not perform his promise, he would lose the praise and glory of his faithfulness, as well as grace; but this is impossible, Heb. vi. 18. *It is impossible for God to lie.* Hath he said it, and will he not do it? hath he promised, and will he not perform? Surely he will: and therefore, whatever opposition the righteous man meets with, from earth, from hell, and from his own heart, *he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

We come now to the *Application* of the subject; which we shall essay in an use of lamentation, examination, and exhortation.

1st, I may apply this doctrine in an use of *Lamentation* over the wicked man. As the righteous man shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon; so the wicked man becomes worse and worse: it is in 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. said of Ahaz, *in the time of his distress, he did yet trespass more against the Lord: this is that king Ahaz.* Here is a brand of infamy put upon him: *this is that king Ahaz;* that is, that *wicked* man who, instead of being *reformed* by the word and rod of God, became thereby *worse and worse*; he added sin to sin: for, as in 2 Cor. ii. 16. we are to some the *favour of life*, so to others we are the

savour of death. It is an awful passage we have in Isa. xxx. 1. *Wo to the rebellious children, saith the Lord, who take counsel, but not of me,—that they may add sin to sin.* God counsels; as in Rev. iii. 18. *to buy of him gold tryed in the fire, white raiment, and eye salve:* but the wicked will not take his counsel; they follow the imaginations of their own heart; and the longer they follow the imaginations of their own heart, the worse they become. Some have followed the imagination of their own heart so long as to become deists; and deists are, or will become, atheists. They who, under a pretext of admiring the oracles of reason, set aside, as useless, the oracles of revelation, and sap the foundations of all religion, God sometimes, in his just judgment, to punish them for abusing revealed religion, gives them up to extinguish in themselves the principles of natural religion; and so they become worse than Pagans. “I believe, says Trail, there are more atheists in Britain, than among all the Pagan nations in the whole earth. A place where gospel light doth shine, and men rebel against it, is the only place where such monsters are bred.”

2dly. Let us next improve this doctrine in an use of *Examination*: It may be ye do not discern your growth in grace: try if you have true grace; if you have grace at all; if what you have be true, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. And to assist you herein, we shall lay the following evidences before you.

(1.) It is an evidence of true grace, if you have a *desire of grace.* Nech. i. 11. *O Lord, I beseech thee, let thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servants,*

who desire to fear thy name. There is the evidence of their being the Lord's servants; they *desired to fear his name*, not with a legal, slavish fear; but with a gospel, filial fear. He that hath true grace says, that none stand more in need of grace than he; and he breathes out desires for it more than for any thing below. God who hath given thee these desires will give the things desired, Matth. v. 3.

(2.) It is an evidence of true grace if you *prize Christ* above all things; Song v. 10. *My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.* What is a world of dung to the *Pearl of great price*? Whatever he is to others, he is *all in all* to the person who has true grace.

(3.) It is a sign of true grace if ye be *growing in grace*. Things without life will not grow: a stake in the hedge, being without life, will not grow; but even a plant, having a vegetative life, grows: so, the growth in grace evidences the truth of it.

Ah! says one, I am declining instead of growing; am I not an hypocrite? I answer,

1. You must distinguish betwixt growing *simply*, and growing at *all* times: the soul of a righteous man is sometimes like a tree in winter, which hath life in the root only.

2. You must distinguish betwixt growing *really*, and *sensibly*. We are not to judge of the growth of a tree by comparing what it is this day, with what it was yesterday; but by comparing what it is this year, with what it was in former years: so the righteous man is not to judge of his growth, by comparing what he is this day, with what he was yesterday; but

by comparing what he is now, with what he was at his ingrafting into Christ. If thou comparest thyself only with thy sight of the rule itself, thou mayest think that thou art not advancing in godliness: for, as one says, this is a sure thing, the better thou learnest to write, the better copy doth God set before thee; that is, he gives thee to see more strictness in the rule, by unfolding more and more the extent of it.

3. You must distinguish betwixt growing *downward*, and growing *upwards*. The righteous man, in his own apprehension, may not be growing upwards in knowledge, yet he is growing downwards in a humble sense of his ignorance: he may not, in his own apprehension, be growing upwards in faith, and yet he is growing downward in a humble sense of unbelief, *etc.* The righteous man is made sensible more and more of his need of depending upon Christ, that without him he cannot form a good resolution; and when formed, without him he cannot maintain it; and when maintained, without him he cannot execute it; that without him he can do nothing. Of this, Christ daily makes the righteous man sensible: this is a lesson of many days learning. We are more quickly brought off from ourselves, n point of justification, than of sanctification.

4. You must distinguish betwixt a growing in *grace*, and a growing in *gifts*: there may be a decaying in gifts, as in the gift of preaching, praying, and repeating of sermons; and yet a growing in grace: a righteous man, in old age, may preach, if

he be a preacher; and pray more fervently, though less eloquently and notionally.

5. You must distinguish betwixt growing in *essential* grace, as faith and love; and growing in *accessary* grace, as joy and spiritual raptures: there may be a growing in the first, when not in the last.

6. You must distinguish betwixt *growing*, and the *manner* of growing: some grow more speedily than others; some finish their course sooner than others; and so God ripens them sooner for heaven than others. They whose time is shortest, grow fastest.

7. You must distinguish betwixt the several *ranks* of righteous men: they are classed into three ranks, 1 John ii. 12, 13, 14. *I have written unto you little children, because your sins are forgiven you.* Little children is an appellation here given to the three following ranks of Christians; for each of these ranks have equally their sin forgiven, verse. 12. *I write unto you fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning;* that is, ye have known the mystery of Christ crucified, who is from the beginning: *I write unto you young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one, viz. the Devil, through the word of God abiding in them.* *I write unto you babes, for so it should be translated, it being παιδια in the original, and not βαιβια, as in the 12th verse, because ye have known the Father.* Among the first things babes know, they know their father: now fathers were once young men, and young men were once babes. The Corinthians were but babes when the apostle wrote unto them, 1 Cor. iii. 1. *Brethren, I could not speak unto you as*

unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. Indeed it is said, 1 Cor. i. 5. *They were enriched by Christ in all knowledge*; that is, in all notional or literal knowledge: They had much notional or literal knowledge mingled with their spiritual knowledge: their notional or literal knowledge of spiritual things, far exceeded their spiritual knowledge; for, if all their knowledge had been spiritual, it would have made their hearts answerably spiritual: this spiritual knowledge is effective; it carries the heart with it to the thing it apprehends, 1 John iv. 7. *Every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God.* But among the Corinthians, as among many professors at this day, were envyings, strife, and divisions; and so carnal, and consequently but babes in Christ.

8. You must consider, that some have the advantage of others at their *first outset* in Christianity: the Lord gives more grace at first to some than to others. Matth. xxv. 14, 15. *The kingdom of heaven is like a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods: And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability, and straightway took his journey.* Heaven is a far country into which the Man, Christ, hath travelled: and when he ascended on high, he gave gifts unto men, unto one he gave *five talents*, to another he gave but *two*: he divides unto every one severally as he wills.

9. You must consider, that the conversion of some is more remarkable than the conversion of o-

thers : some are converted, but they cannot tell when nor where ; others can tell when and where ; that at such a time and place the tide of spiritual consolation did begin to run high in their souls, and afterward subsiding and abating, they call all into question, for the want of growth : but the tide of consolation is abated, that they, being thereby brought to a greater poverty of spirit, may not confide in any works wrought in them ; and that they may fly to Christ alone, and live by faith on him.

10. You must judge of your growth by the *evidence* of it ; as,

(1.) Judge of your growth by your *conflict* with *spiritual lusts* : if growing, then as fleshly lusts were the lusts on which you made the attack at first ; so these being much subdued, you now mainly fight against spiritual lusts ; such as spiritual pride, legality, *etc.*

(2.) Judge of your growth by the *prevalence* of *temptation* : if growing, then the sparks of Satan's temptations do not so suddenly seize upon you as formerly.

(3.) Judge of your growth by the *power* of your *predominant sin* : if growing, then your darling sin hath not such power over you as formerly.

(4.) Judge of your growth by the *motives* of your *abstaining from sin* : if growing, they be such as arise from your hatred of it, as being a transgression of that law ye love, more than from the motives of shame, modesty, or terrors of conscience ; though these motives, under the inactivity of the former, are of service to the Christian.

(5.) Judge of your growth by the usual *frame* of your spirits in *sacred duties* : if growing, in sa-

cred duties ye do constantly stir up yourself, by the exercise of faith, to take hold of God: of the defect of this exercise, the prophet Isaiah complains in his day, Chap. lxiv. 7. But if in every ordinance of God ye do constantly stir up yourself, by the exercise of faith, to take hold of God, it is an evidence of a great measure of spiritual health.

But after all, say you, in Mark xiii. 30. we read that the *tares* have their growth as well as the *wheat*: How shall we distinguish betwixt the growth of *hypocrites* and the growth of *true believers*?

I answer, Hypocrites grow only in *gifts*, not in *graces*; for they have none: gifts are dead graces, bestowed for the good of others; and graces are living gifts, bestowed also for the person's own good. —Further, hypocrites grow only in the *profession*, not in the *power of godliness*: they may be more taken up with the externals of religion than formerly; and yet remain as great strangers to the power of godliness as ever, 2 Tim. iii. 5. *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof*. Moreover, there is a passage in Eph. iv. 15. which may be read as it is decisive of this point, *Speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ*. —Hypocrites grow up into *themselves*; their gifts puff them up with more and more self-conceit: but believers grow up into Christ; and to grow up into Christ, is to grow more out of ourselves, more emptied of ourselves, and fuller of Christ, when we interest Christ more and more in all we do; both as the Alpha and the Omega, as the efficient and also as the final cause. The apostle's note of universality here is noticeable, *in all things*; believers grow up into Christ in all the *parts*

of the new man, or, in all the *graces* of the Spirit: indeed, a believer may excel more in one grace than in another, as Abraham in faith, and Moses in meekness; yet, while he grows in one grace, he does not decay in another; he doth not grow in faith, and decay in love; he doth not grow in love, and decay in humility; he doth not grow in his zeal against some sins, and decay in his zeal against others; he doth not grow in his respect to some commands, and decay in his respect to others; no, no; he hath a respect to *all God's commands*: he grows up into Christ both in the duties of the first and second table, in the duties of his general and particular calling.

I conclude this use by saying, you must distinguish betwixt the *quantity* and the *quality* of duties: although a believer is not growing as to the *quantity* of duties; that is, they are not more numerous, than formerly: yet he grows as to the *quality* of duties; that is, he goes about them more in the strength of Christ, and with more of a single eye than formerly. Whatever a man does in the strength of Christ, and for God, leaving self behind him, hath the sweetest relish in it. It is not the *bigness*, but the *ripeness* of fruit that makes it relish: so it is not merely the *number* of duties, but going about them, by virtue derived from Christ, and with an eye to the glory of God, which gives them a relish in God's mouth.

3dly, I may apply this doctrine in an use of *Exhortation*. I would,

1. Address you *righteous* persons, who have grace. My first address to you may be tendered in the words

of Peter, 1 Epist. ii. 1, 2, 3. *Laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.* Malice, guile, envy, hypocrisy, and evil-speaking, hinder the efficacy of the word, and suck the sap out of men's souls, like these sprigs of trees, which extract the juice out of them; and therefore lay them aside: it is not simply the *having*, but the *fulfilling* of the lusts which endangers the soul. They must refuse the cravings of inordinate affections who would have their soul to prosper. Thus then, I say, *Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh*, Gal v. 16. The proper food of your souls is the *sincere milk of the word*: and if so be ye have *tasted that the Lord is gracious*; that is, forasmuch as ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious, do ye therefore desire more and more of that milk of the word? Have you experience of the grace of God in the milk of the word? do ye therefore desire more and more of it, and why? not to please your fancy; not to enable you to be a critick, but that you may grow thereby.

2. I would address you in the words of the same apostle Peter, as recorded in his second Epistle, first chapter, 5, 6, 7th verses, *Besides this, give all diligence*, etc. Besides what? I answer, In verse first he says, they had *obtained precious faith*; and seeing it is given you, in Christ's behalf to believe; therefore, *give all diligence*: that is, use diligently all the *means* of grace; looking up to God for the grace of the means; particularly, *add to your faith*,

virtue; that is, the works of virtue: O let not your faith be alone, but shew it by works. Under virtue here is comprehended the six following things; and so, add to virtue, knowledge; that is, prudence, as in 1 Pet. iii. 7; and to prudence, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity. Verse 8. If these things be in you, and abound, they make you, that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. As these things will evidence that ye are neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ; so thereby your knowledge of Christ will be increased. John vii. 17. If any man do God's will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself: that is, if any man do God's will he shall know more and more clearly the doctrine of Christ. As the body warms the cloaths, and then the cloaths warm the body; so the knowledge of Christ leads to gospel practice, and gospel practice leads to more knowledge: the more we know Christ, the more we walk in him; and the more we walk in him, the more we know of him. O but a practical Christian is the most experienced Christian in the world. In Exod. xvi. 20. it is said of some Israelites, they, contrary to the command of God, left of the manna until the morning, and it bred worms: so, when men gather more knowledge of Christ than they make use of, it breeds the worms of various lusts, and of an accusing conscience; on which account it may be fitly said here, as in Eccl. i. 18. He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. But to know Christ, and to use Christ, is the sum of Christianity: and therefore, As ye have

received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, Col. ii. 6. O let Paul's study be your study, Phil. iii. 10. O that I may know him! O that I may know the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death! What was this great man's study all his days? It was to know Christ; not simply the facts of his suffering, death, and resurrection; but the power; that is, the efficacy of them in being dead to sin, as he was; and in his being raised to newness of life, as he was. Paul was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel; and profited in the Jewish religion above his equals: but when it pleased God to reveal his Son in him, he laid it all aside, as loss and dung; verse 8. I count all things loss for the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord. The knowledge of Christ is our sublimest, our greatest learning: in all other learning, even devils may excel men; but it is life eternal to know Christ, and the Father who sent him. The doctrine of the antient philosophers, although extolled highly by many, brought nothing but speculation to their hearers: whereas the doctrine of the gospel brings a Saviour and salvation to us; and therefore, let our hearts with our lips and lives say, God forbid we should glory in any other thing save in the cross of Christ: for all things pertaining to life and godliness, are given to us through the knowledge of him.

I would shut up this address to you, by offering you the three following *Advices*.

1. If you would grow in grace, keep good company, the company of those that evidence themselves to be Christians in heart, Heb. x. 24. As ill men, in combination, make one another worse; so good men, in consort, make one another better, Prov. xxvii. 17.

2. Read frequently *the good Book*, the book of books, the old and new Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ. John v. 39. *Search the scriptures*, says our Lord, *for these are they which testify of me*. And as ye read other books, observe in them every thing that tends to explain the Bible, which tend to point your souls to Christ, and the things above. The books which are sown thickest with hints of this kind, let these be your favourite books; such as a sound exposition of the book of inspiration; and the lives of godly persons: sacred biography is very up-stirring to the godly reader.

3. If your time and capacity will admit, keep a *diary*, a day-book, noting down therein what passes betwixt God and your souls; God's dealing with you, and your carriage to God: and by this method you will perceive your declension, or progress in religion. How carefully have some of our countrymen and women observed God's dealings with their souls, and recorded them for our use! *Blessed are they who observe these things, they shall understand the love and kindness of the Lord*, Psal. cvii. 43.

Lastly, I must address such as have not the *truth* of grace; who are not as yet righteous, but wicked. What shall I say unto you?

1. I must say, this *promise* belongs *not* to you: ye must be *planted*, before ye can grow; ye must be *planted in the house of the Lord*, before ye can grow like a cedar: Ye must be planted in Christ, the good man of the house, before ye can grow like a cedar in Lebanon: I say, ye must be united to Christ by faith; for, as in Col. ii. 19. *He is the head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God*. A wooden leg, though externally knit to a man's body, yet is not a member of it, and so has no nourishment; and therefore grows not. Nevertheless despair not; for,

2. I must say, *Christ died for the ungodly*, Rom. v. 6.

In 2 Sam. xvii. 2. Ahitophel said to Absalom, *I will smite the king only.* Verse 4. *The saying pleased Absalom well.* He was well pleased to have his father killed; and yet, chap. xviii. 5. his father commanded the officers to *deal gently for his sake with the young man; even with Absalom.* Never was natural hatred to a father so strong as in Absalom; and never was natural affection to a child so strong as in David. Here is a resemblance of man's wickedness towards God, and God's mercy towards man; of which, it is hard to say which is the most amazing. David was a type of Christ. O the unmeasurable mercy of Christ, who died for his enemies, prayed for his murderers, who received grace for men of the worst character! Psal. lxxviii. 18. *He received gifts for men, even for the rebellious also; that is, for those who are enemies in their minds by wicked works: and why? that the Lord God might dwell among us; that the holy Ghost, who is the Lord God, might dwell among us.* See John iv. 14.

3. I must say, *despair not*; for though this conditional promise belongs not to you, yet the absolute promise belongs unto you, Acts ii. 29. *The promise is to you, and to your children, to them that are afar off, etc.* What promise? I answer, that promise, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee*: say not, this promise is not to me; refuse not the offer; if ye do, the Lord pity you; for ye are as like the devils as ye can look, who said, *What have we to do with thee?* It is the command of God that ye believe. Refuse the Son of God if you dare. I charge you upon your peril, not to hold back your heart from Christ. *Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt have no other Gods before me: I am the Lord thy God, and require thee, by faith, to claim me as thy God.* Is your heart saying, *Behold I come to thee, for thou art the Lord my God.* Then, then, are ye joined to the Lord, and clothed with his righteousness, and shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

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